

Response Rates for the 2008 Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll

The preliminary estimates for the Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll were released in October 2009. All unit response rates were above the U.S. Census Bureau's standards threshold of 60 percent. The Census Bureau also has a standard on the Total Quantity response, which is a measure of the portion of the estimate of interest that is accounted for by responses. The rate must be above 70 percent. For example the Total Quantity Response Rate (TQRR) for the number of full-time employees in a state must be above 70 percent, or at least 70 percent of the estimated total number of the full-time employees must come from responses. Since the data for 2008 come from a sample of governments, the numerator and denominator of the TQRR must be weighted.

The TQRRs for 2008 were usually above the 70 percent standard with a few notable exceptions. For Florida, the TQRRs for the preliminary data were below 70 percent for Full-time Employees and Payroll as well as for Total Pay. Subsequent follow-up revealed that the wrong file had been sent to the Census Bureau and the correct file would not be sent until after the release of the preliminary estimates. The final estimates for 2008 use these new data for Florida. The preliminary estimates for Full-time Employees and Payroll for Florida were totally imputed using growth rates from similar states in the region applied to the prior year Florida data. For the final data, Florida's new data files were used.

Other Total Quantity Response Rates were also noncompliant. The only changes in compliance between the preliminary and final estimates were for the Florida Total Local estimates. Those variables by state that were noncompliant in the preliminary estimates and remained thus in the final estimates are shown in Table A. As can be seen in the table, some variables are very close to being compliant, like the Rhode Island Part-time Employment and Payroll. Since the unit response rates for all of these states are high (CT—89.4%, MD—95.3%, MA—89.2%, MI—91.9%, NJ—86.8%, NM—83.6%, RI—95.5%, and WV 90.1%), low TQRRs often indicate that a large unit is a nonrespondent. Subsequent research has indicated that this is the case for Maryland and Massachusetts as major school districts in the two states are nonrespondents. Consequently, the data user should beware of education data from these two states.

For the 2009 Survey, new nonresponse follow-up efforts will be taken to try to obtain data from the non respondents identified as critical to obtain for the noncompliant states. We have identified the problems in Maryland and Massachusetts, but research will be done in the other states to see if there are single governmental units contributing to the low TQRRs in those noncompliant states.

Table A: Noncompliant Response Rates for the 2008 Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll

State	Full-time Employment	Full-time Pay	Part-time Employment	Part-time Pay	Total Pay
Connecticut		X (58.1%)		X (58.9%)	X (58.1%)
Maryland		X (67.2%)			X (68.3%)
Massachusetts	X (66.4%)	X (62.2%)	X (59.4%)	X (61.8%)	X (62.2%)
Michigan				X (66.9%)	
New Jersey				X (63.9%)	
New Mexico		X (62.5%)		X (52.4%)	X (62.0%)
Rhode Island			X (69.9%)	X (69.2%)	
West Virginia	X (69.0%)	X (65.9%)		X (68.9%)	X (66.1%)